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This paper begins with an outline of some of the main themes in the ecclesiology Kant presents in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. It then discusses implications of Kant's ecclesiology for issues concerning scriptural interpretation and religious toleration. With the help of these implications, an objection to Kant's ecclesiology is developed, and a Kantian ecclesiology modified in response to the objection is sketched out. The Roman Catholic ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council is compared to both Kant's ecclesiology and the modified Kantian ecclesiology. It is argued that on some points the ecclesiology of Vatican II represents movement in the direction of Kant's ecclesiology while on others tension between Kant and Vatican II can be reduced by the modified Kantian ecclesiology.

Much recent work in philosophy of religion by Christian philosophers has been done, so to speak, under a banner on which is emblazoned the motto 'Faith Seeking Understanding.' That motto adorns the cover of this journal. Such philosophy typically operates within a theological circle; it is philosophical theology with philosophy firmly fixed in the adjectival position. It has produced noteworthy explications and defenses of such distinctively Christian doctrines as the Trinity, the Incarnation and the Atonement.[1] It also stands in sharp contrast to the philosophy of religion more customary in modernity since Hume, which views theological circles from the outside. They are dimensions of human culture that form the subject matter of religious studies, but philosophy, like the other disciplines that constitute religious studies, approaches them with secular methods and assumptions. From this perspective, many distinctively Christian doctrines are highly problematic; being revealed mysteries of faith, they resist philosophical examination and on that account suffer from neglect or perhaps misunderstanding by philosophers.

Yet recent Christian philosophical theology has not been comprehensive in its engagement with theology. It is striking that it does not contain a richly textured discussion of philosophical ecclesiology, a doctrine of the church or churches. I think this is an unfortunate lacuna, and my hope is that this paper will serve as a stimulus to a discussion that begins to fill the gap. In order to be provocative, I focus on the ecclesiology Kant sets forth in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* and *The Conflict of the Faculties*. Some Christians will probably find my choice of a starting point odd if not

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offensive. As John Hare observes, "especially in America, Christians who know about Kant tend to think of him as the major philosophical source of the rot which has led to the decline of Christianity in the West in the last two hundred years. He is seen as having taken a decisive step, perhaps the decisive step, away from the traditional faith."[2] I disagree with this view. Like Hare, I take seriously what he calls the Christian seriousness of Kant. I plan to argue that Kant's ecclesiology contains a lesson that contemporary Christian philosophical theologians would do well to learn.

The paper is divided into four sections. In the first, I give a rough sketch of some of the main themes in Kant's ecclesiology. The second lays out Kant's solutions to two important problems; they concern scriptural interpretation and religious toleration. In the third, I consider a major objection to Kant's views and suggest a modified Kantian ecclesiology that tries to accommodate the aspect of it that I find persuasive. The fourth and final section compares the Roman Catholic ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council with both Kant's ecclesiology and my modified Kantian ecclesiology. It argues that on some points the ecclesiology of Vatican II represents substantial movement in the direction of Kant's ecclesiology while on other points tension between Kant and Vatican II can be reduced by my modified Kantian ecclesiology.

I. Kant's Ecclesiology

In response to doubts about the work's intention, Kant begins the preface to the second edition of *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* with an explanation of what he hopes to accomplish in the book. Since a faith that purports to contain historical revelation can include the pure religion of reason while the latter cannot include what is historical in the former, he tells us, we should make the experiment of regarding the two as related like a pair of concentric circles. The pure religion of reason will be contained within the inner circle, and the philosopher, as a teacher of pure reason according to a priori principles alone, will be restricted to the inner circle. If this experiment succeeds, Kant wants us to conduct another. It is to examine alleged revelation, which is to be found in the part of the outer circle not contained in the inner circle, in the light of moral concepts in order to "see whether it does not lead back to the very same pure *rational system* of religion."[3] If it does, Kant thinks, "we shall be able to say that reason can be found to be not only compatible with Scripture but also at one with it, so that he who follows one (under guidance of moral concepts) will not fail to conform to the other" (p. 11). For Kant, much is at stake in the second experiment because he thinks all of us are committed to the pure religion of reason by virtue of our possession of reason. So if the second experiment succeeds, those of us who are also committed to revelation cannot be shown to have inconsistent commitments provided we interpret revelation in the light of moral concepts. If this is not the case, Kant sees only two possibilities for those who are committed to revelation. Either they will have two religions within them, and the two will be inconsistent. Or they will have within them the pure religion of reason and a conflicting cult of ceremonial worship. However this combination is bound to be unstable

because a cult has value only as a means. As Kant puts it, if the religion of reason and a ceremonial cult conflict, then, though shaking them up together might temporarily unite them, "directly, like oil and water, they must needs separate from one another, and the purely moral (the religion of reason) be allowed to float on top" (p. 12). Clearly Kant's project then is to use the pure religion of reason, if it is possible to do so, as a critical control on faith that relies on purported historical revelation.

How does the project provide a way into a discussion of ecclesiology? In Book One of the *Religion*, Kant argues that we all suffer from a propensity to evil which is itself evil because we have brought it upon ourselves and are thus accountable for it. In Book Two, he goes on to contend that each of us can, because he or she ought to do so, carry out a moral revolution, aided by extrahuman assistance we cannot understand if it is needed, that dethrones, though it cannot eradicate, the evil propensity, depriving it of sovereignty over us.[4] But even if each of us overthrows the sovereignty of this evil principle, all of us remain at risk and in danger that its sovereignty will be reestablished because we have not yet removed ourselves from an ethical state of nature, as it were, in which we are apt to corrupt one another. According to Kant, in such a state "despite the good will of each individual, yet because they lack a principle which unites them, they recede, through their dissensions, from the common goal of goodness and, just as though they were *instruments of evil*, expose one another to the risk of falling once again under the sovereignty of the evil principle" (p. 88). Our response to this risk ought to be to bestir ourselves to leave the ethical state of nature in order to become members of an ethical commonwealth. Kant thinks we have a duty to do so.[5]

An ethical commonwealth is to be distinguished from a political state. In a political state, we stand under coercive laws that regulate outer behavior while, in an ethical commonwealth, only non-coercive laws concerning inner morality, laws of virtue alone, unite us. Moreover, unlike moral laws, which concern what we are certain lies within our power, the idea of an ethical commonwealth involves "working toward a whole regarding which we do not know whether, as such, it lies in our power or not" (p. 89). Hence the duty to endeavor to become members of such a social union is, according to Kant, a *sui generis* duty of the human race toward itself. Since public human laws can only regulate outer behavior, we cannot think of ourselves as the legislators of an ethical commonwealth. Nor can we suppose that its laws are statutes enacted merely by the will of a superior being, divine positive laws, for in that case they would not be moral laws and the duty to comply with them would not be the free duty of virtue. Kant concludes that "only he can be thought of as highest lawgiver of an ethical commonwealth with respect to whom all *true duties*, hence also the ethical, must be represented as *at the same time* his commands; he must therefore also be 'one who knows the heart,' in order to see into the innermost parts of the disposition of each individual and, as is necessary in every commonwealth, to bring it about that each receives whatever his actions are worth" (pp. 90-91). But the concept of such a highest legislator just is the concept of God as moral ruler of the world. And so an ethical commonwealth must be thought of as "a people under

divine commands, i.e., as a people of God, and indeed *under laws of virtue*" (p. 91). Of course, for Kant, a people of God is not a state with a theocratic constitution in which humans are subject to divine statutory laws; the divine legislation of a people of God is reason's moral self-legislation transformed into a public principle of social union. Thus the idea of an ethical commonwealth as a people of God under laws of virtue possesses objective reality in human reason itself, and it fits comfortably within Kant's inner circle, where it contributes, as we shall see, to his account of the pure religion of reason.

Kant considers this idea a sublime ideal, but he is not optimistic about our prospects for realizing it on earth under our own steam. He tells us that it is never wholly attainable and dwindles markedly under human hands; he thinks something about sensuous human nature circumscribes the means at our disposal for embodying it in any human institution. Given the stuff we are made of and the evil propensity we have brought upon ourselves, how, he asks rhetorically, "can one expect something perfectly straight to be framed out of such crooked wood" (p. 92)?[6] He therefore suggests that founding a moral people of God is really a task only God can consummate, but he also insists that we must proceed as if everything depends upon us. What shall we do now to prepare ourselves for the divine completion of our endeavors? Kant's answer to this question is his ecclesiology.

For Kant, an ethical commonwealth under divine moral legislation is a church. Considered merely as an ideal, such an ethical commonwealth may be thought of as the church invisible. An actual social union of humans that harmonizes with this ideal is a visible church, and "the true (visible) church is that which exhibits the (moral) kingdom of God on earth so far as it can be brought to pass by men" (p. 92). The political constitution of the true visible church will be neither that of a monarchy, ruled by a pope or patriarch, nor that of an aristocracy, ruled by bishops and other prelates. It will not be a democracy in which each member is governed by special inspiration or private illumination. Kant thinks its constitution is best grasped in terms of a domestic analogy familiar from Christian piety. The true visible church will be like "a household (family) under a common, though invisible, moral Father, whose holy Son, knowing His will and yet standing in blood relation with all members of the household, takes His place in making His will better known to them" (p. 93). So our endeavors are to be directed to doing what we can to bring about the existence of the true visible church and our membership in it.

One might consider it an easy task to bring about the existence of the true visible church. Since its divine legislation is also reason's self-legislation, reason itself tells us what its laws must be. Hence it may seem that pure religious faith, which consists of belief in God together with our belief in morality's laws, suffices to enable us to bring the true visible church into existence. Kant rejects this optimistic view. He insists that "by reason of a peculiar weakness of human nature, pure faith can never be relied on as much as it deserves, that is, a church cannot be established on it alone" (p. 94). As a matter of empirical fact, churches always originate in historical or revealed faiths. But such faiths contain not only moral laws that are uni-

versally binding but also specifications of the organizational norms of concrete social unions or congregations. Kant thinks the question of how a church ought to be organized under particular conditions of experience "appears to be unanswerable by reason alone and to require statutory legislation of which we become cognizant only through revelation, *i. e.*, an historical faith which, in contradistinction to pure religious faith, we can call ecclesiastical faith" (p. 96). We have no way of knowing whether or not such organizational statutes are divine statutory law. On the one hand, it would be presumptuous to assume that they are, because doing so might lead us to neglect the task of trying to improve the church's form. On the other, it would be equally presumptuous to deny that they are if they are completely harmonious with morality and, in addition, we cannot account for them in terms of normal processes of cultural development. Because of a weakness in human nature, Kant concludes, "in men's striving toward an ethical commonwealth, ecclesiastical faith thus naturally precedes pure religious faith; *temples* (buildings consecrated to the public worship of God) were before *churches* (meeting-places for the instruction and quickening of moral dispositions), *priests* (consecrated stewards of pious rites) before *divines* (teachers of the purely moral religion)" (p. 97).

Yet, morally speaking, the temporal order of precedence is the reverse of the correct order; pure religious faith morally precedes ecclesiastical faiths. Statutory ecclesiastical faith should be only a vehicle for pure religious faith, and observance of the statutes specified by ecclesiastical faith is only a means to reaching the goal of living as a member of an ethical commonwealth. Nevertheless, Kant supposes the vehicle is important. Its purpose is to preserve pure religious faith and insure its propagation in the same form to various times and places. According to Kant, ecclesiastical faiths founded on scriptures are better suited to serving this purpose than those merely grounded in tradition. History shows, he tells us, that "it has never been possible to destroy a faith grounded in scripture, even with the most devastating revolutions in the state, whereas the faith established upon tradition and ancient public observances has promptly met its downfall when the state was overthrown" (p. 98). Even if one doubts these sweeping historical generalizations, one can easily see the plausibility of the suggestion that scriptural faiths are, other things being equal, better able to preserve and propagate themselves than those that rest entirely on custom and oral tradition.

For Kant, there is only one pure religion of reason, which consists of belief in morality and morality's God. The pure religion of reason can, however, be consistently embedded in more than one ecclesiastical faith, and so many ecclesiastical faiths, all of which are its vehicles, are only to be expected. In terms of Kant's analogy with the pair of concentric circles, the inner circle can be consistently contained in a variety of outer circles. Kant seems willing to allow that several ecclesiastical faiths actually do, or could come to, serve as vehicles for the religion of pure reason. He says: "There is only *one* (true) *religion*; but there can be *faiths* of several kinds. We can say further that even in the various churches, severed from one another by reason of the diversity of their modes of belief, one and the same true religion can yet be found" (p. 98). None of these churches is, as it stands, iden-

tical with the true visible church, for all of them lack the universality Kant regards as a mark of the true visible church. All of them, being based on ecclesiastical faiths, contain elements of historical or revealed faith that cannot command, as the pure religion of reason can, universal assent, because, Kant contends, "an historical faith, grounded solely in facts, can extend its influence no further than tidings of it can reach, subject to circumstances of time and place and dependent upon the capacity [of men] to judge the credibility of such tidings" (p. 94). Yet each such church contains within the shell of its ecclesiastical faith, so to speak, a kernel that is the pure religion of reason. Each has within it the potential to grow closer to the true visible church.

According to Kant, it is incumbent on us, in striving toward an ethical commonwealth, to liberate the kernel from the shell to the extent that it is humanly possible for us to do so. How far can we hope to get in this project? On this question, Kant appears to be of two minds. In one passage, he expresses an optimistic moral eschatology. He predicts that "in the end religion will gradually be freed from all empirical determining grounds and from all statutes which rest on history and which through the agency of ecclesiastical faith provisionally unite men for the requirements of the good; and thus *at last* the pure religion of reason will rule over all, 'so that God may be all in all'" (p. 112, my emphasis). But shortly thereafter he cautions us that this divine ethical state on earth "is still infinitely removed from us" (p. 113). And in a less optimistic projection, though he insists that "we ought even now to labor industriously, by way of continuously setting free the pure religion from its present shell, which as yet cannot be spared," he immediately goes on to say of ecclesiastical faith "not that it is to cease (for as a vehicle it may perhaps always be useful and necessary) but that it be able to cease; whereby is indicated merely the inner stability of the pure moral faith" (p. 126). So Kant, in one frame of mind, predicts that the pure religion of reason will eventually become freestanding and the true visible church will be realized on earth. In another, however, he more guardedly claims that, though it could be freestanding, the pure religion of reason may never actually succeed in becoming free of the shell of ecclesiastical faith. Yet, in either case, we ought even now to do what we can, in striving toward an ethical commonwealth, to liberate the pure religion of reason from the shell of ecclesiastical faith and to realize the true visible church on earth.

A famous paragraph in which Kant lays out a taxonomy can be put to work in summing up his ecclesiology. It goes as follows:

> Religion is (subjectively regarded) the recognition of all duties as divine commands. That religion in which I must know in advance that something is a divine command in order to recognize it as my duty, is the *revealed* religion (or the one standing in need of a revelation); in contrast, that religion in which I must first know that something is my duty before I can accept it as a divine injunction is the *natural* religion. He who interprets the natural religion alone as morally necessary, *i. e.*, as duty can be called the *rationalist* (in matters of belief); if he denies the reality of all supernatural divine revelation he

> is called a *naturalist*; if he recognizes revelation, but asserts that to know and accept it as real is not a necessary requisite to religion, he could be named a *pure rationalist*; but if he holds that belief in it is necessary to universal religion, he could be named the pure *supernaturalist* in matters of faith (pp. 142-143).

Where does Kant himself fit into this set of categories? The question bristles with difficulties.

Kant tells us that his distinction between natural and revealed religion is meant to classify religion with reference to its first origin and inner possibility. In these terms, the pure religion of reason is the natural religion, and various ecclesiastical faiths are forms of the revealed religion. Kant himself is a rationalist of some kind; he thinks our moral duties are exhausted by those prescribed by the pure religion of reason. He is not a naturalist, for he does not deny the reality of supernatural revelation. A rationalist, he tells us, "will never contest either the inner possibility of revelation in general or the necessity of a revelation as a divine means for the introduction of true religion; for these matters no man can determine through reason" (p. 143). Kant contests neither of them. Nor is he a pure supernaturalist. Far from being necessary to universal religion, historical revelation is a formidable if not insurmountable obstacle to universality. Thus the only thing left in Kant's taxonomic scheme for him to be is a pure rationalist. But if he falls into this category, he not only does not deny the possibility of revelation he affirms its actuality.

But classifying Kant as a pure rationalist by default is problematic. Clearly it is possible to hold that accepting revelation is not necessary for religion and neither to deny the reality of revelation, as the naturalist does, nor to affirm its reality, as the pure rationalist does. In other words, there is logical space in Kant's taxonomy for another category. Since he does not give it a name, I propose to call those who fall into it agnostic rationalists. We can then raise this question: Why should we classify Kant as a pure rationalist rather than as an agnostic rationalist?

The answer, I think, begins to emerge when we note that Kant classifies religion not only with respect to first origin and inner possibility, as noted above, but also with respect to its capacity for being widely shared with others. In terms of the latter classification, we have "either the *natural* religion, of which (once it has arisen) everyone can be convinced through his own reason, or a *learned* religion, of which one can convince others only through the agency of learning (in and through which they must be guided)" (p. 143). According to this classification, the pure religion of reason is natural. Moreover, it seems possible for there to be a religion that is both natural, because everyone can be convinced of it through reason, and revealed in terms of its origin, because its revelation contains nothing incompatible with what reason is capable of discovering. Noting this possibility, Kant says that "such a religion, accordingly, can be *natural*, and at the same time *revealed*, when it is so constituted that men *could and ought to have discovered it* of themselves merely through the use of their reason, although they *would* not have come upon it so early, or over so wide an area, as is required" (pp. 143-144). I consider it characteristic of Enlightenment

thought to take this possibility seriously. Kant seems almost to be echoing Lessing, who had earlier said that "revelation gives nothing to the human race which human reason could not arrive at on its own; only it has given, and still gives to it, the most important of these things first."[7] I suggest that Kant takes Christianity, properly interpreted, to be a religion that is both natural and revealed and accepts it thus understood. He therefore recognizes its revelation and is indeed a pure rationalist.[8]

Support for my suggestion can be found in Kant's explicit discussions of Christianity. He first discusses the Christian religion as a natural religion. After summarizing some of the moral doctrines expounded by the figure he describes as the Teacher, Kant delivers the following somewhat convoluted but nevertheless highly favorable verdict: "Here then is a complete religion, which can be presented to all men comprehensibly and convincingly through their own reason; while the possibility and even the necessity of its being an archetype for us to imitate (so far as men are capable of that imitation) have, be it noted, been made evident by means of an example without either the truth of those teachings nor the authority and worth of the Teacher requiring any external certification (for which scholarship or miracles, which are not matters for everyone, would be required)" (p. 150). Kant also discusses the Christian religion as a learned religion. If Christianity as a learned religion is not to conflict with the natural religion within it, Kant maintains, "recognition and respect must be accorded, in Christian dogmatic, to universal human reason as the supremely commanding principle in a natural religion, and the revealed doctrine, upon which a church is founded and which stands in need of the learned as interpreters and conservers, must be cherished and cultivated as merely a means, but a most precious means, of making this doctrine comprehensible, even to the ignorant, as well as widely diffused and permanent" (pp. 152-153). It is not obvious which doctrine Kant has in mind when he refers to the project of making a certain doctrine comprehensible, widely diffused and permanent. However, it makes little sense to suppose that the revealed doctrine is to be cherished as a mere means to making itself comprehensible. So I believe we should understand Kant's thought to be that the revealed doctrine is to be cherished and cultivated as a mere means to making the doctrine of natural religion within Christianity comprehensible, widely diffused and permanent.[9]

What is the relation, by Kant's lights, between actual Christian churches, founded on the revealed doctrines of Christianity, and his ideal of a true church? Clearly no actual Christian church has yet become the true visible church. But has any of them become a true church in some other sense? Kant's criterion for addressing this question is the following: "When, therefore, (in conformity with the unavoidable limitation of human reason) an historical faith attaches itself to pure religion, as its vehicle, but with the consciousness that it is only a vehicle, and when this faith, having become ecclesiastical, embraces the principle of a continual approach to pure religious faith, in order finally to be able to dispense with the historical vehicle, a church thus characterized can at any time be called the *true* church; but, since conflict over historical dogmas can never be avoided, it can be spoken of only as the church *militant*, though with the prospect of becom-

ing finally the changeless and all-unifying church *triumphant*" (p. 106). I dare say no actual Christian church in Kant's day had either become conscious of the historical or revealed portion of its doctrine as a mere vehicle or embraced the principle of approaching a purely moral religion in order to be able to dispense with that historical vehicle. I also think no actual Christian church in our day has done either of these things. Judged by Kant's standard, no actual Christian church has yet become the true church, not even the true church militant. By his lights, then, the reformation of Christianity, bravely begun by Luther and Calvin, still has a long way to go.[10]

II. Two Implications of Kant's Ecclesiology

Kant's ecclesiology influences his views on many topics that should be of interest to Christian philosophers. I shall discuss only two of these topics: scriptural interpretation and religious tolerance. Both are of considerable intrinsic importance. However, I focus on Kant's views about them chiefly because his views on these topics provide a basis for my criticism of fundamental features of his ecclesiology.

According to Kant, the pure religion of reason ought to serve as the interpreter of ecclesiastical faiths. If an ecclesiastical faith's revelation is to be united or harmonized with the pure religion of reason and not to separate from it like water from oil, an interpretation of the revelation is required that agrees with the universal moral rules laid down by practical reason. When the revelation is contained in scripture, as Kant thinks it best that it should be, interpretation will consist of textual exegesis. He cautions us that "frequently this interpretation may, in the light of the text (of the revelation), appear forced—it may often really be forced; and yet if the text can possibly support it, it must be preferred to a literal interpretation which either contains nothing at all [helpful] to morality or else actually works counter to moral incentives" (pp. 100-101). In *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Kant proposes a specific principle of scriptural exegesis. It says this: "If a scriptural text contains certain *theoretical* teachings which are proclaimed sacred but which *transcend* all rational concepts (even moral ones), it *may be* interpreted in the interests of practical reason; but if it contains statements that contradict practical reason, it *must* be interpreted in the interests of practical reason."[11] Examples Kant provides can be used to illustrate the two clauses of this principle at work.

Consider first the topic of Christology. According to a high Christology, Christ possesses both a divine nature and a human nature, united in a single person. Kant can find nothing in such a conception that serves the interests of practical reason. As he points out, if we think of Christ "as the Divinity 'dwelling incarnate' in a real man and working as a second nature in him, then we can draw nothing practical from this mystery: since we cannot require ourselves to rival a God, we cannot take him as an example."[12] In addition, we must confront the puzzle of why, if such a union can be brought about in one case, God does not produce it in every human case, thereby making all of us essentially well-pleasing to God. But Kant does find something that serves the interests of practical reason in a

Christology which interprets Christ as the personification of the idea of humanity in its complete moral perfection. Hence he considers it permissible for him to employ this idea in interpreting scriptural texts that, if taken more literally, seem to support a high Christology. In a famous passage, he offers such an interpretation of the first verses of the Prologue to John's Gospel. It goes as follows:

> *Mankind* (rational earthly existence in general) *in its complete moral perfection* is that which alone can render a world the object of a divine decree and the end of creation. With such perfection as the prime condition, happiness is the direct consequence, according to the will of the Supreme Being. Man so conceived, alone pleasing to God, "is in Him through eternity"; the idea of him proceeds from God's very being; hence he is no created thing but His only-begotten Son, "the *Word* (the *Fiat*!) through which all other things are, and without which nothing is in existence that is made" (since for him, that is, for rational existence in the world, so far as he may be regarded in the light of his moral destiny, all things were made) (p. 54).

Nicholas Wolterstorff intriguingly likens the sketch of an interpretation in this passage to "Brendel's giving one of his pupils some suggestions for interpreting the *Hammerklavier*."[13] No doubt some Christian readers of the Prologue to John's Gospel will consider the interpretation Kant sketches arbitrary or capricious; others will view his suggestions as forced or strained. To the charge of arbitrariness, Kant could respond that his interpretation is constrained by the interests of practical reason. Taking Christ to be a personification of the idea of humanity in its complete moral perfection provides us with a vivid paradigm to imitate in our moral striving. As we have seen, Kant would not be bothered by the objection that his interpretation is forced. Even if it is, he would insist, provided the text can support it, if only barely so, it is permissible and, indeed, must be preferred to more literal rivals that do not serve the interests of practical reason.

Consider next the narrative in Genesis 22 of the *akedah*, the binding of Isaac. According to the story, God commands Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son, innocent Isaac, and Abraham consents to do so. If the story is taken to be literally true, Abraham actually is divinely commanded to kill Isaac. For Kant, however, Abraham clearly has a moral duty not to kill Isaac derived from practical reason, and so Abraham must be represented as divinely commanded not to kill Isaac. Hence the story, taken literally, contradicts practical reason in the sense that together they yield the result that Abraham is divinely commanded to perform each member of a pair of contradictory actions. According to the second clause of his principle of scriptural exegesis, Kant must interpret Genesis 22 in the interests of practical reason. He does so by denying, in effect, that God ever told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. As Kant sees it, "in some cases man can be sure that the voice he hears is *not* God's; for if the voice commands him to do something contrary to the moral law, then no matter how majestic the apparition may be, and no matter how it may seem to surpass the whole of nature, he must consider it an illusion."[14] And in a footnote Kant goes on to say that

"Abraham should have replied to this supposedly divine voice: 'That I ought not to kill my good son is quite certain. But that you, this apparition, are God—of that I am not certain, and never can be, not even if this voice rings down to me from (visible) heaven.'"[15] So Kant defends the interests of practical reason in the case of the story of the *akedah* by insisting that, if Abraham heard a voice commanding him to sacrifice Isaac that seemed to be God's, he could and should have been sure that it was instead the voice of an illusory apparition. He does not suggest that the story provides any positive service to those interests. But I suppose one might read it in a morally edifying way by holding that the point of having the angel in the story allow Abraham to sacrifice a ram rather than Isaac was to teach that God disapproves of human sacrifice.

Since we are two centuries more removed than Kant was from the Wars of Religion, religious toleration is perhaps a less burning issue for us than it was for him. In the West, it is largely taken for granted now, except in peripheral trouble spots such as Beirut, Belfast and Bosnia. But for most of the common era respectable Christian opinion endorsed the use of the coercive power of the state to persecute religious dissent. From the time of Augustine onward, Luke 14:23 was often cited as justification in revelation for such an endorsement. In that verse, which is contained in the Parable of the Great Dinner, the master says to the slave, "Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled." Advocates of religious toleration before Kant, for instance, Pierre Bayle in his *Philosophical Commentary on the Words of the Gospel, "Compel them to come in,"* had grappled with this text.[16] Kant alludes to it in a brief treatment of toleration.

Kant's discussion of toleration is set in the context of an exposition of his doctrine of conscience. He defines conscience as "a state of consciousness which in itself is duty" (p. 173). Opposing the probabilist principle that the opinion that an action may well be right is sufficient to justify performing it, he insists that I must be sure that any action I propose to perform is right. In other words, I have a duty to be conscious that any action I intend to perform is right. Kant illustrates how the duty of conscience works with the case of an inquisitor who is called upon to pass judgment on someone charged with heresy but otherwise a good citizen. Is it morally permissible for the inquisitor to condemn the accused person to death? In a sentence that alludes to the famous verse from Luke's Gospel, Kant asks us to suppose that the inquisitor "was firm in the belief that a supernaturally revealed Divine Will (perhaps in accord with the saying, *compellite intrare*) permitted him, if it did not actually impose it as duty, to extirpate presumptive disbelief together with the disbelievers" (pp. 174-175). But does the inquisitor's belief, firm though we suppose it to be, have a high enough epistemic status that the inquisitor can in good conscience intend to act on it? In a familiar passage in which he alludes to the *akedah*, Kant returns a negative answer to this question. It goes as follows:

> That it is wrong to deprive a man of his life because of his religious faith is certain, unless (to allow for the most remote possibility) a Divine Will, made known in extraordinary fashion, has ordered it

> otherwise. But that God has ever uttered this terrible injunction can be asserted only on the basis of historical documents and is never apodictically certain. After all, the revelation has reached the inquisitor only through men and has been interpreted by men, and even did it appear to have come to him from God Himself (like the command delivered to Abraham to slaughter his own son like a sheep) it is at least possible that in this instance a mistake has prevailed. But if this is so, the inquisitor would risk the danger of doing what would be wrong in the highest degree; and in this very act he is behaving unconscientiously (p. 175).

According to Kant, then, the inquisitor's situation is to be analyzed in epistemic terms along these lines. The duty not to kill people on account of their religious faith is part of the pure religion of reason and lies within the inner circle. The claim that it binds the inquisitor has a very high epistemic status. By contrast, the claim that killing heretics is morally permissible, or even required, belongs to the historical or revealed part of an ecclesiastical faith and lies in that portion of the outer circle not also contained within the inner circle. It has a lower epistemic status. And even if killing heretics were apparently directly commanded by God, the claim that killing heretics is not wrong would not acquire an epistemic status exceeding that of the claim that killing heretics is wrong. Hence the inquisitor can never be sure that killing a heretic is morally right. The inquisitor would therefore act unconscientiously and thereby violate a duty by condemning a heretic, who is otherwise a good citizen, to death. Kant generalizes from the example to other cases in which following an injunction rooted in the historical or revealed part of an ecclesiastical faith carries with it "the danger of disobedience to a human duty which is certain in and of itself" (p. 175). And presumably the generalization is meant by Kant to cover not only extreme cases such killing heretics but also other uses of coercive measures by church or state to suppress dissent from a particular ecclesiastical faith.

What is more, Kant extends the argument to acts allowable in themselves and taken by the revealed part of an ecclesiastical faith to be divinely commanded such as worshipping in public on a certain day of the week or professing firm belief in doctrines whose sole source is historical revelation. He asks whether ecclesiastical authorities may or should impose what they hold to be such positive revealed law on the laity as an article of faith they must subscribe to on pain of forfeiting their status in their empirical church. The fault he finds with such an imposition is that "the clergyman would be requiring the people at least inwardly to confess something to be as true as is their belief in God, *i. e.*, to confess, as though in the presence of God, something which they do not know with certainty" (p. 175). In doing this the clergyman would, Kant thinks, be acting in an unconscientious manner. He "would himself go counter to conscience in forcing others to believe that of which he himself can never be wholly convinced; he should therefore in justice consider well what he does, for he must answer for all abuse arising out of such a compulsory faith" (p. 176). If we take Kant's reference to being wholly convinced to concern complete psychological conviction, we will probably think he underestimates the extent

to which the clergy can acquire convictions whose psychological certitude outstrips their epistemic certainty. So we would probably do better to attribute to him the thought that it is unconscientious and so contrary to duty to force others to believe anything one cannot be, and so is not, epistemically certain of oneself. On this interpretation, the duty of conscientiousness supports, as Kant sees it, not only mutual toleration among diverse ecclesiastical faiths but also free faith, that is, faith freely assented to by all, within each of them.

III. Kant's Ecclesiology Criticized and Revised

Christians may well wish to quarrel with Kant's ecclesiology on numerous points of detail. It might be argued, for example, that the text of the Prologue to John's Gospel cannot support the interpretation of it Kant sketches. Or, it might be claimed that Kant's understanding of the case of the inquisitor and of the *akedah* is incorrect. He allows, after all, for the remote possibility that the inquisitor has been ordered by God to kill heretics by means of a divine command made known in extraordinary fashion. And clearly it is within God's power, though it would indeed be extraordinary, to provide evidence that would make the claim that such a command had been given maximally certain. To be sure, as Kant notes, even if God did this and the inquisitor took the command to have come from God, it would remain possible that a mistake had prevailed. However, one might disagree with the Kantian view according to which it is maximally certain that it is always wrong to deprive someone of life for heresy. It is also possible that there are exceptions to this moral principle. So it seems at least possible for it to be more certain that God has commanded an inquisitor to kill a heretic than that it is wrong for the inquisitor to do so. Similarly, it seems at least possible for it to be more certain that Abraham has been commanded by God to sacrifice Isaac than that it is wrong for Abraham to sacrifice Isaac. Hence it seems at least possible for there to be a conscientious inquisitor who condemns a heretic to death and an Abraham who conscientiously consents to sacrifice Isaac.

But, for present purposes, I think it would not be useful to linger too long over points of detail. I propose instead to proceed directly to what I take to be the deepest objection to Kant's ecclesiology, which is a challenge to its basic structure. The objection is that practical reason is just not up to the task Kant assigns it in his ecclesiology. In order to present the objection, let me draw attention to a feature of Kant's image of the concentric circles I have heretofore not mentioned. Kant needs the circumference of the inner circle to mark two distinct boundaries. On the one hand, within it lies the pure religion of reason, which consists of Kantian morality and its postulated God, while outside it lie other historical and revealed doctrines of ecclesiastical faiths. On the other hand, within it lie propositions with some very high epistemic status such as being certain in and of themselves while outside are to be found only propositions with one or another lower epistemic status. Kant supposes that these two distinctions, one based on kinds of doctrine and the other epistemologically based, coincide in extension and so determine a single boundary. As I see it, this supposi-

tion is the ground of his confidence that the pure religion of reason ought to serve as the interpreter of ecclesiastical faiths and that, when conflict arises, scripture must be interpreted in the interests of practical reason. It is also what lies behind his view that the moral deliverances of practical reason are fit to serve as an Archimedean fixed point from which ecclesiastical faiths, relegated to role of mere vehicles, can be subjected to critique, purification, reformation and perhaps even elimination. Yet there are, in my opinion, two good reasons for us to doubt Kant's powerful supposition.

One stems from the historical fate of Kant's own moral theory. In the course of the more than two centuries during which it has been debated, it has not become the focus of a consensus on the part of all reasonable moral inquirers who have considered it. Many reasonable people reject the conclusions Kant draws about the famous four examples of the *Groundwork*. Of course there are strategies for salvaging parts of Kantian moral theory. It can be argued, for instance, that Kant himself misunderstood his own theory in some respects and thus made mistakes in applying it to one or more of the four examples. The predictable result of such salvage operations, however, seems to me to be the plurality of reasonable views found on the contemporary philosophical scene that are more or less Kantian in spirit. And other modern moral theories have suffered similar fates. I think Robert M. Adams has made the correct pessimistic induction. He says: "Nothing in the history of modern secular ethical theory gives reason to expect that general agreement on a single comprehensive ethical theory will ever be achieved—or that, if achieved, it would long endure in a climate of free inquiry."[17] Like rock and roll, reasonable pluralism in moral theory is here to stay. From the fact of reasonable pluralism in moral theory, I draw the conclusion that it is utopian to hope that, under conditions of free inquiry, any moral theory will, in its entirety, ever acquire the high epistemic status for all of us needed to fit it for the role Kant wanted his moral theory to play in the universally shared pure religion of reason.

A second reason for skepticism about Kant's powerful supposition can be generated from the method of reflective equilibrium that has received a good deal of attention in recent discussion of the methodology of moral theorizing.[18] According to that method, roughly described, one is to seek coherence in one's views, starting from one's considered judgments, by proceeding first to a narrow equilibrium in ethics between judgments about principles and judgments about particular cases and then to a wide equilibrium between ethical judgments and judgments about other matters such as the nature of human persons. In the course of employing the procedure, when conflicts in judgment come up and must be resolved in the interest of achieving coherence, one is to stick with the judgment that seems to one more likely to be correct and reject or revise the other judgment. If the procedure is successful, its output will be a large and coherent body of judgments, some ethical and some not. Suppose that one belief seeming more likely than another to be correct is both a contributor to and an indicator of the former having a higher epistemic status than the latter. Consider people who have religious beliefs and treat them as inputs to the process of seeking wide reflective equilibrium. Is it likely that at wide reflective equilibrium their beliefs will be structured in a way that is aptly

represented by Kant's concentric circles? I think not.

Think first about what is likely to happen when the people under consideration proceed to narrow reflective equilibrium. Their method does not guarantee convergence in judgment. I imagine it is possible that they converge on a single set of moral judgments that coincides everywhere with Kant's morality. But if they are even moderately diverse in cultural background and personal experience, then, though some overlap in moral judgment at narrow reflective equilibrium would not be surprising, it is highly unlikely that there will be complete agreement on Kant's morality. Think next about the move from narrow reflective equilibrium of moral beliefs to wide reflective equilibrium of moral beliefs with theological beliefs from historical sources or revelation. Again, I imagine it is possible that, whenever conflict between moral beliefs and theological beliefs arises, all the people being considered always resolve it by sticking with the moral beliefs and revising or reinterpreting the theological beliefs. But this too is vastly unlikely. It is much more likely that many of them will sometimes resolve conflict in favor of moral beliefs and sometimes in favor of theological beliefs. Finally, think about the people in question after they have reached theo-ethical coherence at wide reflective equilibrium; consider what would be the result of trying to isolate for each of them an inner kernel of beliefs with maximal certainty or some comparable high epistemic status by drawing a circle around exactly those beliefs. Would this inner core consist in all cases of Kant's pure religion of reason? I grant that this is possible, but, once more, I consider it extremely unlikely. It is very likely that there would be no universally shared inner core at all. It is also very likely that for many of the people under consideration the inner core, if there were one, would contain a mixture of moral and theological beliefs rather than consisting entirely of belief in Kant's morality and its deity.

I believe the method of wide reflective equilibrium is a useful method in ethics. In the present context, however, it serves for me mainly as a device for representing what is likely to happen in conditions of moderate cultural and experiential diversity under the free play of human reason. My conclusion is that reason is unlikely to yield a comprehensive moral doctrine capable of functioning as Kant expects his morality operate. It is highly improbable that reason will carve out for all who employ it conscientiously anything like Kant's pure religion of reason that can both be universally shared and serve as a fixed point in a critique of the revelations of various ecclesiastical faiths. From an epistemological point of view, Kant's ecclesiology is therefore excessively ambitious.

But it is important not to throw the baby out with the bath water. If we look at things less systematically and more on a piecemeal basis, I dare say most of us will discover cases in which we have moral convictions we rightly consider more likely to be correct than competing convictions whose source is the historical part of an ecclesiastical faith. So I see promise in a chastened Kantianism that proceeds on a case by case basis to deploy moral beliefs of high epistemic status as levers, as it were, to move churches and their members in the direction of reforming ecclesiastical arrangements and reinterpreting scriptures. It may be that such a critical stance toward ecclesiastical faiths is only feasible in a culture in which there are accessible

moral sources independent of ecclesiastical faith. If so, chastened Kantian ecclesiology will be as much a product of modernity as Kant's own more ambitious systematic project of ecclesiological critique was.

Something like a chastened Kantianism seems to be at work in a recent discussion of the *akedah* by Robert M. Adams. In his *Finite and Infinite Goods*, there is a chapter devoted to Abraham's dilemma, though the Abraham of whom Adams speaks is not exactly the Abraham of the Hebrew Bible. Adams operates with a methodology that allows for ethical sources independent of theology to exert critical leverage on theological ethics; he tells us that "we simply will not and should not accept a theological ethics that ascribes to God a set of commands that is *too much* at variance with the ethical outlook that we bring to our theological thinking."[19] He cites the passage from *The Conflict of the Faculties*, quoted above, in which Kant provides Abraham with a reply to the supposedly divine voice, and he goes on to say that it is not easy to reject Kant's verdict on the case. Like Kant, Adams concentrates on the epistemological aspects of the situation. He comes down on Kant's side of the epistemological issue. Reflecting on the possibility of divinely commanded but otherwise unnecessary human sacrifices, he observes that "a situation in which I would find it reasonable to believe that a good God had given such an abhorrent command seems to me so unimaginable, however, that I think it is at best a waste of spiritual energy to try to decide what one should do in that case."[20] And in the same vein, he concludes the chapter with the remark that "the question whether God commands such a thing should stay off our epistemological agenda as long as it possibly can, which I expect will be forever."[21] Yet Adams does not rule out altogether the possibility that he might believe a divine command to sacrifice an innocent person had been issued. He considers the story, told in Shalom Spiegel's *The Last Trial*, of a Rabbi Samuel and his son Yehiel, also a rabbi, who were confronted with the alternatives of death and forced conversion to Christianity.[22] In the story, Yehiel offers himself to be sacrificed, and Samuel kills him. Commenting on it, Adams states that "if they claimed that God told them to do what they did, I would not say that no such command could come from God."[23] It is in the spirit of the chastened Kantianism I find promising to conduct discussion of the issue of divinely commanded human sacrifice on a case by case basis, as Adams does. It is also consonant with its spirit to expect some reasonable disagreement between him and others about either the case of Abraham and Isaac or the case of Samuel and Yehiel or about both cases.

But what, if anything, does Kantian ecclesiology, chastened or not, have to do with actual Christian churches and the ecclesiologies their theologians provide for them? In conclusion, I address this question with reference to the Roman Catholic ecclesiology of the Second Vatican Council.

IV. Chastened Kantian Ecclesiology and Roman Catholic Ecclesiology

No doubt there are contemporary religious movements that have gone a long way toward the Kantian ideal of a largely moral core embedded in an historical vehicle that minimizes commitment to revealed doctrine. Subject

to correction by those who view them from the inside, I would say that Unitarian Universalism is one example rooted in Christianity and Reform Judaism is another. But the idea that the ecclesiology of the Roman Catholic Church has moved in a Kantian direction may initially seem quite surprising. I propose to explore this idea briefly with reference to the ecclesiology of Vatican II, basing my discussion on the summary of that ecclesiology found in Richard P. McBrien's magisterial *Catholicism*. It would, of course, not be plausible to claim that Kant directly influenced the ecclesiology of Vatican II. A standard history of the Catholic Church, written by the theologian McBrien praises as the most important ecclesiologist of the twentieth century, does not even mention Kant in its brief treatment of the *Aufklärung*.[24] However, I think it is plausible to view Kant as having articulated in a particularly forceful and radical way thoughts that have become increasingly influential in recent Catholic ecclesiology.

McBrien sums up the ecclesiology of Vatican II in ten points and spells out how each of them represents a change in Catholic thought. After reporting what he says, I shall in each case add my own comparisons with Kantian ecclesiology.

First, the church is, first and foremost, a mystery or sacrament. According to McBrien, this principle "supplants the pre-Vatican II emphasis on the Church as a *means* of salvation."[25] In Kant's ecclesiology, mystery and sacrament lie outside the inner circle that circumscribes the pure religion of reason and belong to the part of ecclesiastical faith that is not included in this religion. Yet the philosopher has no reason to deny them provided they do not conflict with morality. They must, however, be regarded as means, not of salvation but of strengthening human efforts to create an ethical commonwealth. In my chastened Kantian ecclesiology, it is not impossible in principle for claims about sacramentality to achieve high epistemic status at wide reflective equilibrium. But there remains a large gap between Kant's vision of the core of the church as nothing but a moral community and the view of Vatican II that it is a mystery.

Second, the church is the whole people of God. McBrien takes this principle to have "replaced the pre-Vatican II emphasis on the Church as hierarchical institution, which tended to make the study of the Church more akin to 'hierarchology' than to 'eccesiology'" (p. 684). This principle is consonant with Kant's ecclesiology in two ways. The ethical commonwealth, which is the *telos* of empirical churches, is to be represented as a people of God, potentially universal in scope, under laws of virtue. And the principle's opposition to hierarchy matches Kant's insistence that the true visible church will be neither a monarchy nor an aristocracy. The chastened Kantian ecclesiology I favor can endorse these two points of agreement between Kant and Vatican II.

Third, the whole people of God—laity, religious, and clergy alike—is called to participate in the mission of Christ as Prophet, Priest and King. McBrien thinks this principle "replaces the pre-Vatican II notion of 'Catholic Action,' wherein the laity participates only in the mission of the hierarchy" (p. 684). To the extent that the thrust of this principle is against hierarchy it is harmonious with Kant's ecclesiology. However, there is tension between its conception of the mission of Christ and Kant's christology. For Kant,

Christ functions as the exemplar of humanity in its complete moral perfection and as the Teacher of the morality of the Gospels. Within the limits of reason, Christ serves only moral purposes, though reason is not in a position to deny flatly other christological mysteries. Kant could, I think, find no moral use for Christ as a king. He could allow there to be a role for Christ as a prophet if we think of prophets chiefly as preachers of moral reform. And he could even make room for a priestly function for Christ provided it placed the emphasis on his work as what Kant describes as a divine, that is, a teacher of moral religion, rather than as what Kant thinks of as a priest, a steward of pious rites. So there is partial overlap rather than complete coincidence between this principle of Vatican II and Kant's ecclesiology. My more latitudianarian chastened Kantianism leaves open the possibility of greater overlap with the principle at wide reflective equilibrium.

Fourth, the mission of the people of God includes service to human needs in the social, political and economic orders as well as the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments. McBrien argues that this principle "supplants the pre-Vatican II notion of 'pre-evangelization,' wherein such service is, or may be, a necessary preparation for the preaching of the Gospel (evangelization) but is not itself essential to the Church's mission in the same way as the preaching or the celebration of the sacraments" (p. 684). By promoting service to human needs from the status of a means to evangelization to that of a central part of the mission in its own right, this principle takes a step in the direction of the Kantian view that morality must be at the core of any church with prospects for becoming a true church. Kant's own ecclesiology, however, would assign sacramentality to the part of ecclesiastical faith that belongs to the shell rather than the kernel of pure moral religion. As previously noted, a chastened Kantian ecclesiology does not guarantee that graduations in epistemic status will enforce an invidious distinction of this sort.

Fifth, the church is realized and expressed at the local as well as the universal level; it is a communion of churches. McBrien's view is that this principle "supplants the common pre-Vatican II notion that the Church is, for all practical purposes, always understood as the Church universal, centralized in the Vatican under the supreme authority of the pope, with each diocese considered only as an administrative division of the Church universal, and each parish, in turn, an administrative subdivision of the diocese" (p. 685). Kant's ecclesiology does not go into detail about how to set up the administration of a large empirical church. But it does not aspire to the kind of universality that depends on securing agreement by submission to a centralized authority. Instead it looks for spontaneous agreement in morality that derives from the self-legislation of practical reason in each of us. So Kant's ecclesiology is consistent with the full realization of the moral core of the pure religion of reason in local churches. Chastened Kantianism's more modest expectation is that there will be a reasonable pluralism of moral views both within and among local churches; it also supports the conclusion that a central authority's attempts to impose agreement in moral belief are unlikely to succeed under conditions of free inquiry.

Sixth, the church embraces more than the Roman Catholic Church; it is the whole Body of Christ: Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans and Protestants

alike. McBrien holds that this principle "sets aside the pre-Vatican II concept that the Roman Catholic Church alone is the one, true Church, and that the other Christian communities (never called 'churches' before Vatican II) are somehow 'related' to the Church but are not real members of it" (p. 685). Like this principle, Kant's view rejects Roman Catholic ecclesiological exclusivism. By Kant's lights, however, no actual Christian church is, as we have seen, the true church, not even the true church militant. Yet, like this principle, his ecclesiology does allow that true religion can be found in various Christian churches despite the diversity of their modes of belief. A chastened Kantian ecclesiology will, of course, also allow that various Christian churches can achieve epistemic parity. Lacking Kant's pure religion of reason in its unadorned form to serve as a *telos* for ecclesiastical development, chastened Kantianism cannot appeal to it as a benchmark by which to judge that any actual Christian church falls short of being a true church.

Seventh, the mission of the whole church is (a) one of proclamation of the Gospel that is always subordinate to the Word of God; (b) one of celebration of the sacraments in a way that engages the intelligent participation of worshippers; (c) one of witnessing to the Gospel through a life-style that is marked by humility, compassion, respect for human rights, etc.; and (d) one of service to those in need, both inside and outside the Church. McBrien believes this principle "expands upon a narrower view of mission in pre-Vatican II ecclesiology, namely, one that tended to restrict the mission to the preaching of the Word and the celebration of the sacraments, and one which perhaps paid too little attention to the missionary responsibility of corporate witnessing to the Gospel" (pp. 685-686). To the extent that this expansion's third and fourth points stress the importance of morality by adding weight to the tasks of witnessing through virtuous living and serving those in need, they represent movement in the direction of Kant's ecclesiology and are compatible with chastened Kantianism. But, as we saw in the discussion above of the fourth principle, the second point's emphasis on sacramentality gives it role somewhat at odds with Kant's view that sacramentality is to be relegated to the empirical vehicle from which pure moral religion should strive to free itself. And if the ranking referred to in the first point involves subordinating the morality of the Gospels to revealed doctrine, Kant would surely insist that the proper order of subordination is the reverse. A chastened Kantianism will not necessarily be in tension with the ecclesiology of Vatican II on these two points.

Eighth, all authority in the church is to be exercised as a service and in a collegial mode. McBrien maintains that this principle "is intended to transform the exercise of authority from one of domination and unilateral decision-making, as prevailed in the pre-Vatican II period" (p. 686). Since Kant says repeatedly that the ministers of a church should be servants of its invisible head and not high officials who exercise domination over its members, he would undoubtedly approve of the intention to work such a transformation in the exercise of ecclesiastical authority. Chastened Kantianism too permits and can endorse change along these lines.

Ninth, religious truth is to be found outside the Body of Christ and should be respected wherever it is found; in no case is anyone to be

coerced to embrace Christianity or Catholicism. In McBrien's opinion, this principle "replaces a too-exclusive understanding of revelation as 'Christian revelation,' as well as the formula 'Error has no rights'" (p. 686). By means of this princple, Vatican II joins Kant in supporting religious freedom and religious toleration, and these values have become sufficiently robust under democratic regimes that most chastened Kantians who have the good fortune to live under such regimes would also support them at wide reflective equilibrium. And both Kant's ecclesiology and its chastened kin lack the resources to establish the claim that revelation cannot occur outside of Christianity.

Tenth, the nature and mission of the church are to be understood in relationship and in subordination to the Kingdom of God. McBrien supposes that this principle "replaces what was perhaps the most serious pre-Vatican II ecclesiological misunderstanding, namely, that the Church is identical with the Kingdom of God" (p. 686). If this were so, he adds, the church would be beyond all need for institutional reform. No doubt there are eschatological differences between Kant and Vatican II. Kant thinks that the gradual transition from ecclesiastical faith to the exclusive sovereignty of pure moral faith is the coming of the Kingdom of God. He tells us: "We have good reason to say, however, that 'the Kingdom of God is come unto us' once the principle of the gradual transition of ecclesiastical faith to the universal religion of reason, and so to a (divine) ethical state on earth, has become general and has also gained somewhere a *public* foothold, even though the actual establishment of this state is still infinitely removed from us" (p. 113). But even when the Kingdom has come in principle, there will remain, before it is established, an interval of time that may never end or may end only in a divinely produced consummation. Throughout that interval, critique and reform of ecclesiastical institutions will continue to be needed. Though the picture Vatican II presents of what the Kingdom of God will look like when it is fully realized may differ substantially from Kant's vision, the gap between the church of the present and the foreseeable future and the Kingdom of the *eschaton* leaves similar space for institutional critique and reform. It is likely that a gap of this kind will also exist at wide reflective equilibrium in chastened Kantianism.

In order to paint a balanced and comprehensive picture of both convergences and divergences of the ecclesiologies of Kant and Vatican II, I have covered all ten of the points under which McBrien organizes his treatment of the ecclesiology of Vatican II. It is obvious that my discussion of that ecclesiology does not delve deeply into it and is far from exhaustive. It does, however, allow us to discern a pattern. By comparison with pre-Vatican II Catholic views, the ecclesiology of Vatican II represents movement in a Kantian direction on several moral and political issues. They include opposition to hierarchical domination in the church, recognition of the centrality in the church's mission of moral service to those in need, acceptance of reasonable ecclesiastical pluralism within Christianity, support for religious freedom and religious toleration and, most important of all, acknowledgement of the continuing legitimacy of institutional critique and reform. But sources of tension remain, the most salient of which is the emphasis in the ecclesiology of Vatican II on sacramentality as a crucial

part of the definition of the church and its mission. For Kant, a doctrine of sacramentality would belong to the part of ecclesiastical faith that is not also a part of the pure religion of reason. Though he would allow that reason is not competent to deny such a doctrine provided it does not conflict with morality, he would locate it, along with other historical or revealed doctrines, in the vehicle of moral religion, which can be dispensed with in principle, and deny it the importance it has in the ecclesiology of Vatican II. I have argued that a chastened Kantianism, which is more realistic about the limits of reason as we have come to understand them since the time of Kant, would serve to reduce if not eliminate tension of this kind.

In ecclesiology, Kant may properly be conceived, in my opinion, as continuing and radicalizing the tradition of the Reformation.[26] Its slogan, 'Always Reforming,' signals a recognition that, all things human being susceptible to corruption, the work of reformation is never done. By analogical extension, we may think of idolatry of a certain sort as the danger against which ongoing reform is to help safeguard us. According to Robert M. Adams, this sort of idolatry "happens when one fails to distinguish devotion to God or the good from devotion to one's own religion or one's own idea of God or the good."[27] One's church too can become an idol in this sense. The ecclesiology of Vatican II insists that the Catholic Church is not identical with the Kingdom of God; in so doing it opens a possibility for ecclesiastical reform that counteracts the human tendency toward this form of idolatry. In a more radical way, Kant had earlier made room for a similar possibility by distinguishing between the empirical churches of the ecclesiastical faiths and the true church of pure moral faith, which has not yet been realized on earth and may never be fully realized unless God intervenes. I think a less radical chastened Kantianism should not lose sight of this possibility. Its ecclesiology should share with those of Kant and Vatican II openness, stretching indefinitely into the future, to critique and reform of ecclesiastical institutions. This is an important lesson Christian philosophers can and should discover in Kantian philosophical ecclesiology.[28]

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NOTES

1. For some examples, see the essays in *Trinity, Incarnation and Atonement*, eds. Ronald J. Feenstra and Cornelius Plantinga, Jr. (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

2. John E. Hare, *The Moral Gap* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 35.

3. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, trans. Theodore M. Greene and Hoyt H. Hudson (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1960), p. 11. Hereafter page references to this work by Kant will be made parenthetically in the body of the text.

4. For critical discussion, see my "Original Sin, Radical Evil and Moral Identity," *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (1984).

5. For a more detailed treatment of Kant's conception of the ethical commonwealth or, as he translates the German, ethical community, see Allen

Wood, "Religion, Ethical Community and the Struggle Against Evil," *Faith and Philosophy* 17 (2000).

6. Isaiah Berlin was fond of Kant's comparison of humanity to crooked wood; a collection of his essays bears the title *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*.

7. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "The Education of the Human Race," in *Lessing's Theological Writings*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), p. 83.

8. I thus side with Hare in a disagreement with Wood. See Hare, *op. cit.*, pp. 41-45.

9. This interpretation is supported by translation of the *Religion* by di Giovanni in the Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. See *Religion and Rational Theology*, trans. Allen W. Wood and George di Giovanni (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 186. According to this translation, the doctrine of revelation "must be cherished and cultivated as a mere means, though a most precious one, for giving meaning, diffusion and continuity to *natural religion* even among the ignorant" (my emphasis).

10. After noting that, for Kant, the Christian church was seen as the precursor of a true ethical commonwealth, Keith Ward asks whether a universal moral community is "what Jesus and his community of disciples was [*sic*] really concerned with." See Keith Ward, *Religion and Community* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 303. Almost certainly the answer to this question is negative. But we can also ask ourselves whether a universal moral community is what the Christian church today ought to be really concerned with. This is Kant's question. A negative answer to Ward's question does not entail a negative answer to Kant's question.

11. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (Lincoln: University Nebraska Press, 1992), p. 65.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

13. Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 178.

14. Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, p. 115.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 115. I have silently corrected a typo in the quotation.

16. For interesting discussion of Bayle's views on toleration, see John Kilcullen, *Sincerity and Truth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

17. Robert Merrihew Adams, "Religious Ethics in a Pluralistic Society," in *Prospects for a Common Morality*, eds. Gene Outka and John P. Reeder, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 97.

18. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 19-21 and 48-51, and Norman Daniels, "Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics," *Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1979).

19. Robert Merrihew Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 256.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 290.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 291.

22. Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial*, trans. Judah Goldin (Woodstock: Jewish Lights, 1993), pp. 22-23.

23. Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods*, p. 286.

24. Yves Congar, *L'Église: De saint Augustin à l'époque moderne* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1970), pp. 409-412.

25. Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism*, Vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Winston Press, 1980), p. 684. Hereafter pages references to this volume will be made parenthetically in the body of the text.

26. While I was working on this paper, I learned that my project, announced above in my introduction, of trying to provoke Christian philoso-

phers to discuss ecclesiology has very recently been in part preempted by two papers on Kierkegaard's ecclesiology, Michael Plekon's "Kierkegaard at the End: His 'Last' Sermon, Eschatology and the Attack on the Church" and Bruce H. Kirmmse's "The Thunderstorm: Kierkegaard's Ecclesiology," both published in *Faith and Philosophy* 17:1 (2000). Despite large differences in their interpretations of Kierkegaard's view of the church, both Plekon and Kirmmse portray him as further radicalizing, in ways that I would say go well beyond Kant, the Reformation's tradition of critique of ecclesiastical institutions.

27. Adams, *Finite and Infinite Goods*, p. 210.

28. I am grateful to Karl Ameriks, Richard P. McBrien and Thomas F. O'Meara, OP, for helpful bibliographical suggestions. A shortened version of this paper was the Konyndyk Memorial Lecture I gave to a session sponsored by the Society of Christian Philosophers at the 2000 APA Central Division Meeting. I dedicate the paper to the memory of Ken Konyndyk.